

12 August 1954

STATINTL

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR:

On his NBC program, "Heart of the News," at 10:15 P.M. last night, Henry Cassidy discussed the story of Dr. Otto John. Mr. Cassidy talked briefly at the start of the program, mentioning that this was their second coverage on Dr. John and that it was probably their last. He described briefly the press conference in East Berlin and said, "Dr. John looked well and in full command of his faculties." Mr. Cassidy then read the wire reports that Dr. John had said that "on his recent trip to Washington, where he conferred with Allen Dulles, chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, he gathered that out of the hysterical fear in the United States another war is being prepared and that the German people would suffer most from this war." Mr. Cassidy then introduced Arthur Barriault, speaking from Washington.

Mr. Barriault said in part: "Washington is trying hard to ignore" the statements made by Dr. Otto John at his press conference. "Such statements can be called 'sheer Soviet propaganda', as they are being called by American officials. . . . Those who came to know John" on his recent visit to the capital "believe he is acting under duress, under Red influence, the victim of brainwashing." They have no proof of this, but they believe it.

Mr. Barriault continued, "Today we received a new statement from Allen Dulles. Mr. Dulles and his colleagues are not given to public statements." Mr. Dulles said, 'It's the straight Communist party line; it's sheer Soviet propaganda.' "The original theory in intelligence circles in Washington was that John was drugged" and taken to East Berlin. Government officials insist that while John was in Washington "he was given no secret information; he did not make too good an impression on our personnel."

Mr. Barriault also stated that Congress is restless and is feeling some consternation because "huge sums are appropriated for CIA and the Agency must operate behind the scenes." He also said that "intelligence officials are unhappy over a man who accepted our hospitality in February, and five months later" was describing his visit to the Communists.

Mr. Cassidy next called on Robert McCormick, speaking from Berlin. Mr. Cassidy described Mr. McCormick as a close personal friend of Dr. John, but Mr. McCormick referred in his broadcast to the "several occasions on which I have met him." Mr. McCormick described Dr. John as "carried away by his big audience," which included Wilfred Burchett, correspondent for the London DAILY WORKER. Mr. McCormick stated that there was "no evidence that John was tortured, drugged, beaten, or terrified. . . . He seemed to speak with conviction." . . . After the question period, John came down into the audience and "shook hands with his old friends. He seemed absolutely at ease. . . . He spoke with deep conviction and sincerity. He believes that the course he chose is the proper one."

Mr. Cassidy then turned to other aspects of the day's news.